SYNOPSIS

A HOLISTIC STUDY AMONG WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS ON SUCCESSFUL MARKETING STRATEGIES INCLUSIVE OF SOCIAL MEDIA APPROACHES

BY

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A. TITLE OF THE THESIS

A holistic study among Women Entrepreneurs on successful marketing strategies inclusive of Social Media approaches

B. INTRODUCTION

Development of a country does not imply the improvement of infrastructure and technology. It includes development of each and every citizen of the country irrespective of gender who will enjoy improved quality of life. Gender equality is an essential component of country's economic growth (World Bank, 2006). Women's poverty conditions, limited social mobility, inequality at home and workplace are some of the major issues that need special attention to make the world a better place to live (Saikia, 2018). In developing countries women are still facing discrimination in access to education, work, economic assets and participation in political decision making. Khan (2016) also found that women produce 30 percent of all food commodities consumed but they have only 10 percent of the property or wealth of the country. Thus gender equality, women's empowerment, women's economic participation and provision of rural financial services are essential and considered to be necessary for development of a nation (Mayoux, 2019). Not that employment has not grown, but not at the rate at which income has expanded. Overall growth of employment has lagged far behind the growth of income, especially in the rural areas (Boruah and Roy, 2018). The growing problem of unemployment is indeed a big challenge for the country.

Assam being a comparatively backward state with number of baffling problems like unemployment, underemployment and poverty is not able to fulfill all the needs of the people living in it. Although there are quite a number of large scale industries in the state, the population is so high that there is hardly any chance of employing all the men and women in them. In this situation, entrepreneurship can play an important role by providing employment opportunities to different sections of society. Thus, employment generation, development of backward areas and improvement of the quality of life in villages will be the consequences of development of entrepreneurship (Bhattacharyya and Borkakoty, 2020).

The growth of women entrepreneurs requires acceleration because entrepreneurial development is impossible without the participation of women. A congenial environment is needed to enable a woman to participate actively in entrepreneurial activities (Mohan, 2016). Besides monitory gains and financial inclusion, women entrepreneurship bring up resource generation, reputation and recognition for women (Colaco and Hans, 2018). The research gap identified reveals that majority of the studies reviewed related to women entrepreneurship

and entrepreneurial training programmes were ex- post facto researches carried out on trained and untrained women entrepreneurs. Few studies were also seen in the field of action research transforming non- entrepreneur women to entrepreneurs with emphasis on impact assessment of the training programmes. The investigator had seen hardly such studies which focus on the very trending social media marketing of rural women entrepreneurs, although many studies have pointed out the issues and challenges faced by the rural women in marketing of products. The investigator had made an attempt to carry out action research by implementing entrepreneurial training programme on marketing strategies including social media and assessing impact of it on selected women in Lakhimpur, Assam. Hence, the study had taken a humble step forward to motivate, develop skill and orient women to bring into the mainstream of entrepreneurship through social media, thereby, resolving their challenges and empowering them in all spheres of life.

C. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Primary objectives:

i. To study the socio-economic profile of the respondents.
ii. To identify and impart need based entrepreneurial training programmes to the respondents.
iii. To provide knowledge and skill based training to the respondents on effective use of certain social media tools to support their marketing activities.
iv. To assess the impact of the training programme on the selected respondents in terms of their knowledge and practice.

Secondary Objective:

i. To evaluate the attitude of the respondents towards social media marketing after the training programme.

D. NEED OF THE STUDY

- Rural women entrepreneurs in Assam are lagging behind mainly because of the relative absence of economic opportunities, minimal participation in decision making process, low risk bearing ability and lack of exposure.
- Providing them with a proper platform for exposure and marketing can certainly aid in income generation of the women. Enterprises that leverage the power of social media gain competitive advantage. Social media not only serves as marketing channel but used as a means of connecting with customers and other factors around the enterprise.

- Hence, it becomes imperative to provide them training on needful contents so as to cope up with the changing times and productively utilize their free for sustaining enterprises. This will not only generate income for the family but also improves the decision making capabilities of the rural women leading to overall empowerment.
- The study has helped the selected women in uncovering a recent pathway for advertisement and marketing of products and motivated the struggling household women entrepreneurs to build a proper established enterprise in offline as well as online platform, especially through social media.

E. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

i. There is no significant association between the selected socio economic variables and interest of the women towards the entrepreneurial training programme.
ii. There is no significant difference between the pre and post knowledge scores of the women after the training programme.
iii. The rural women develops negative attitude towards social media marketing after the training programme.
iv. The practice of the women in terms of marketing through social media is not improved after the training programme.

F. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Humbe (2021) in her study "Role of Social Media in Marketing of Handloom Products" established that marketing has been recognized as being central to the growth and development of the handloom industry. In last few years the idea of buying and selling has tremendously changed. Out of total population in the country, 13% use social media and spend approximately 2 hours 26 minutes daily. The use of social media by mobile users is 57% of total population and time spend is 2 hours 36 minutes per day. Social media marketing is one of the most important types of online marketing where small businesses are marketing their products/services and brands on social media websites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, etc. The use of social media in marketing can benefit the handloom industries by developing the awareness and benefits of the handloom products, reducing marketing expenses, increasing the sales, providing the details regarding the marketplace to purchase the handloom products and exposure towards handloom products.

Tiwari and Sanadya (2018), in their study "Sustainable Development through Women Entrepreneurship" selected 230 women purposively in Kota district of Rajasthan who had

attended eight different vocational training programmes. Areas of training were processing and value addition, fruits and vegetables preservation, tailoring and handicraft items like wall painting, napkin holder, file cover, soft toys, etc. The impact of training programmes was judged according to their performance, rate of self- employment and amount of earnings. It was evaluated that rural youth were deeply motivated during all the trainings, developed skill and keen to start some vocation after the completion of training. They formed Self Help Groups and started working. Out of 230 samples, 115 trainees started their own enterprises. They engaged in tailoring, value addition of food products, artificial jewellery making and other handicraft items. Income was more from tailoring compared to other vocations and was taken up as an enterprise by 40 percent of the trainees.

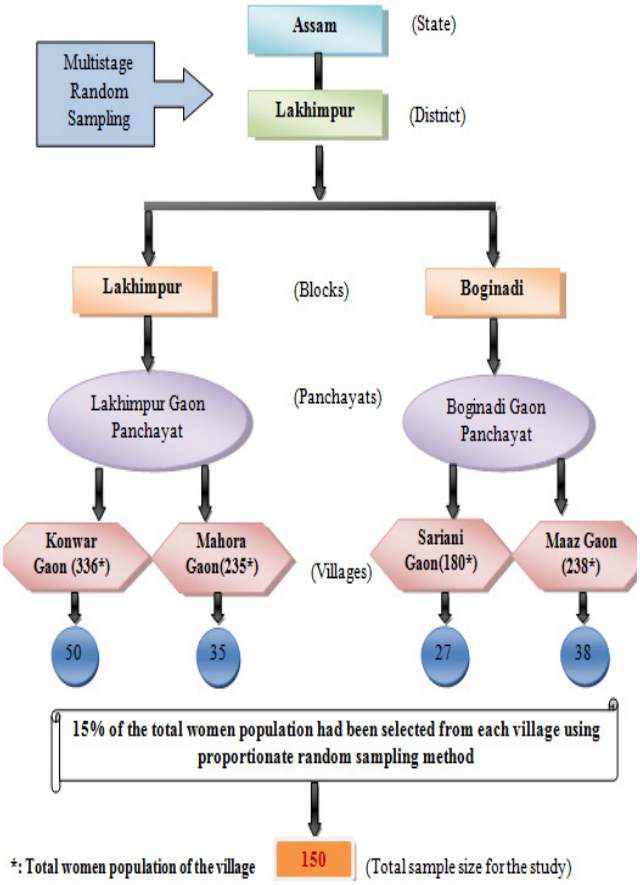
Timungpi and Chanu (2018) conducted a study on "A Study on Motivational Factors of Women in Entrepreneurial Ventures of Assam Hills" in which the main objectives were to find out the types of entrepreneurial ventures owned by women in Karbi Anglong District of Assam, to examine the motivating factors of women in taking up entrepreneurial ventures in the study area and to measure the degree of influence of motivating factors among women entrepreneurs in the study area. The primary data had been collected through field survey and direct personal interview of 51 respondents who included both the registered and unregistered women entrepreneurs of Karbi Anglong district. The main research instrument to obtain information and collect data was structured schedule which contain closed ended questions. It was found that different motivational factors had a diverse impact on the women entrepreneurs of Karbi Anglong district. Economic necessity and unemployment were the major factors that compelled women to go for entrepreneurial ventures. Lack of information about various starts up facilities/Schemes was also a stumbling block for them which prevent them from taking full benefits the Government/financial Institutions.

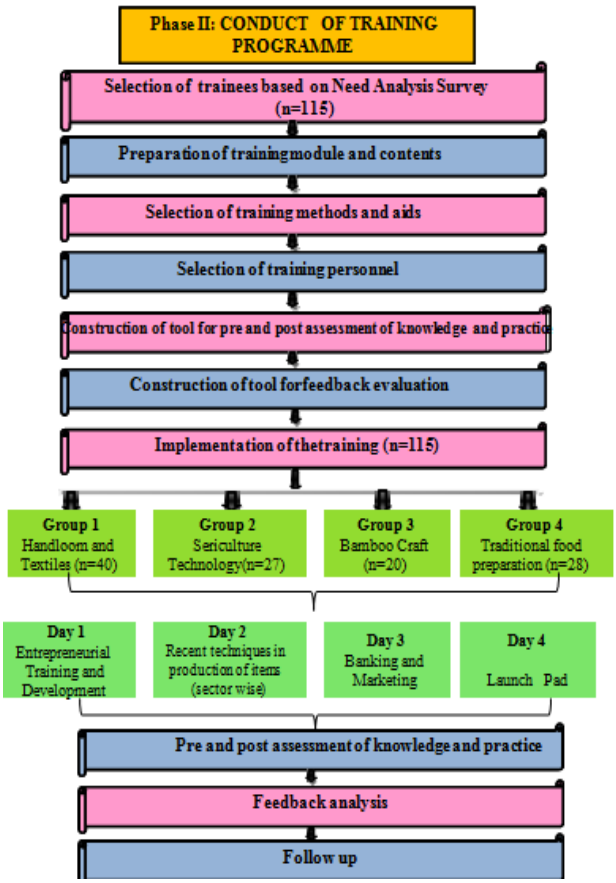
G. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

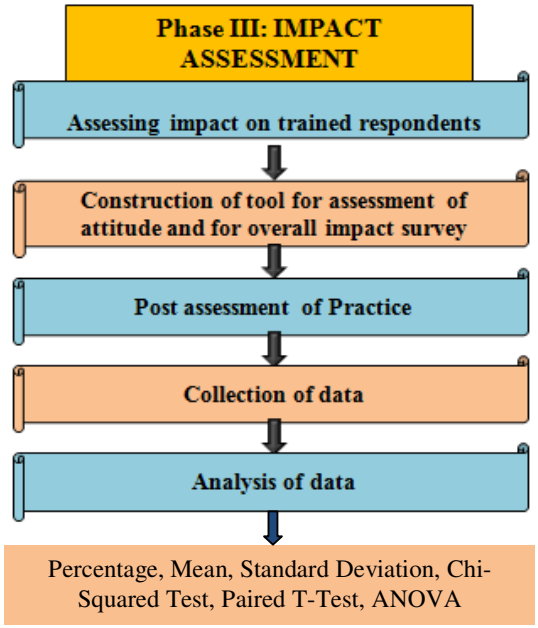
The whole procedure through which the research was carried out comprised of three main phases illustrated below:

- Phase I: Need Analysis Survey
- Phase II: Conduct of training programme
- Phase III: Impact Assessment

Phase wise research methodology has been depicted below in the following flowcharts:


Multistage Random Sampling
Assam
(State)
Lakhimpur
(District)
Lakhimpur
(Blocks)
Boginadi
Lakhimpur Gaon Panchayat
(Panchayats)
Boginadi Gaon Panchayat
Konwar Gaon (336*)
Mahora Gaon(235*)
(Villages)
Sariani Gaon(180*)
Maaz Gaon (238*)
50
35
27
38
15% of the total women population had been selected from each village using proportionate random sampling method
*: Total women population of the village
150
(Total sample size for the study)


Phase II: CONDUCT OF TRAINING PROGRAMME
Selection of trainees based on Need Analysis Survey (n=115)
Preparation of training module and contents
Selection of training methods and aids
Selection of training personnel
Construction of tool for pre and post assessment of knowledge and practic
Construction of tool for feedback evaluation
Implementation of the training (n=115)
Group 1 Handloom and Textiles (n=40)
Group 2 Sericulture Technology(n=27)
Group 3 Bamboo Craft (n=20)
Group 4 Traditional food preparation (n=28)
Day 1 Entrepreneurial Training and Development
Day 2 Recent techniques in production of items (sector wise)
Day 3 Banking and Marketing
Day 4 Launch Pad
Pre and post assessment of knowledge and practice
Feedback analysis
Follow up


Phase III: IMPACT ASSESSMENT
Assessing impact on trained respondents
Construction of tool for assessment of attitude and for overall impact survey
Post assessment of Practice
Collection of data
Analysis of data
Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation, Chi-Squared Test, Paired T-Test, ANOVA

H. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Socio- economic profile of the respondents

The socio- economic variables identified in this study comprise of age, caste, religion, marital status, educational qualification, type of family, size of the family, occupation of the family, occupation of the respondent, monthly income of the family, additional income of the family and internet connection in phone. Highest percentage of the selected respondents were found to be in the age group of 25-31 years (31.3 percent), OBC caste (44 percent), Hindu (89.3 percent), married (86.7 percent), attained higher secondary (64 percent), had nuclear family (57.3 percent) with 2-4 members (51.3 percent) , had farming as the main occupation of the family(72.7 percent), housewives (88 percent) and members of Self Help Groups (92.7 percent), overall monthly income of Rs. 20,001-30,000 (52.7 percent) and had internet facility in their phones (80 percent). The reason for collecting data regarding internet facility was to avail the facility of social media marketing through the training programme.

2. Entrepreneurial details of the respondents

Entrepreneurial background details of the respondents showed that 33.3 percent of the selected respondents were involved in the enterprise of **handloom and textiles**, followed by 25.3 percent who were engaged in **sericulture**. 23.3 percent of the respondents were engaged in **traditional food preparation** and only 18.0 percent were involved in **bamboo craft**. Approximately half of the respondents (51.3 percent) had been involved in their enterprises for 10 or more years. Majority from all the enterprises (98 percent) used word of mouth as the advertisement technique applied for marketing and had average monthly profit of Rs. 5,000-Rs.10, 000 (55.3 percent).

3. Entrepreneurial training need analysis of the respondents

Sector wise training expectations of the respondents were assessed and found that respondents involved in handloom and textiles wanted training on operation and designing garments through power looms, new techniques of weaving and dyeing etc. Respondents involved in Sericulture technology wanted training on techniques of disease and pests management, egg preservation etc. Respondents involved in bamboo craft needed training on design various bamboo products like gift items, stationery items furniture items etc. Respondents involved in traditional food preparation wanted training on techniques of better storage and increasing shelf life of the food items etc. For marketing related aspects, respondents were interested in market survey techniques, customer analysis and packaging and labelling, identifying entrepreneurial strength, weakness, opportunities and

challenges(SWOC), loan availing process, budget planning and personality development aspects such as interpersonal etiquette and professionalism, communication, management skills, leadership and so on.

In regard to training preferences on social media marketing, from all the four sector of enterprises preferred to learn social media sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and YouTube. They preferred training on creation of social media pages and business accounts, advertisement and brand promotion, communicating with customers, collecting reviews, privacy and security issues, spams, posts uploading procedures, copyright infringement etc.

In addition, the respondents preferred training methods like lecture, demonstration, hands on experience and video presentations. Majority preferred training venue at their local villages near to their residence, any days of the week and also opted for a short training of 1-2 days and for 2 hours of training only due to various personal and family commitments.

4. Feedback of the training

After the conduct of the training programmes, feedback was collected from the trainees. The overall feedback of the trainees was assessed using a 3-point Likert scale. It was found that 36 percent of the trainees were highly satisfied with the training programme, while 60 percent of the trainees found the training satisfactory. Only a negligible share of 2 percent found the training unsatisfactory. Since the training programme was conducted according to the needs and interests of the trainees, therefore, it was anticipated that their feedback towards the training would be satisfactory. Each feedback items were then ranked based on their mean scores and it was analyzed that the statement “I like the idea of the training” scored the highest rank with a mean score of 2.33, followed by the statement “The training was relevant to my needs” with a mean score of 2.31.

5. Follow- up

Once in a month, the researcher kept a track and followed up the entrepreneurial activities of the trainees after conducting the entrepreneurial training programme in order to assess the progress attained by the trainees, constraints faced and to strengthen the knowledge and skills acquired by them during the training programme. A total of six rounds of follow up activities were conducted and the extension methods adopted were focused group meetings, telephonic conversations, WhatsApp groups, google meetings, individual home visits, etc. However there were also regular messages and phone calls in between the follow up rounds in times of queries. During each rounds of follow up visit, the entrepreneurial track of trainees was assessed and the data figured out shows that till the third round of follow up was

over, majority of the trainees from all the four groups were active in their social media accounts and started promoting their products. Till the sixth round of the follow up i.e. after six months of the training programme, it was found that majority of the trainees were attaining noteworthy economic impact on their enterprises.

6. **Impact of entrepreneurial training programmes on the Knowledge of the trainees before and after the training**

The level of knowledge of the selected trainees on various marketing strategies including social media approaches were examined by calculating the mean and standard deviation. It was found that only 5 percent of them were found to have high level of knowledge before training, which increased to 33 percent post training programme, 40 percent had medium level of knowledge which increased to 65 percent post training programme and 55 percent of the trainees had low level of knowledge which decreased to 2 percent after the training. The average knowledge score before training was 15.57 which increased to 28.23 after the training which was found to be significant at 1 percent level.

7. **Impact of entrepreneurial training programmes on the Practice of the trainees before and after the training**

In terms of practice, it was found that only 10 percent of them were found to have high level of knowledge before training, which increased to 36 percent post training programme, 51.7 percent had medium level of knowledge which increased to 60 percent post training programme and 38.3 percent of the trainees had low level of knowledge which decreased to 4 after the training. The average practice score before training was 4.89 which increased to 24.11 after the training and it was found to be significant at 1 percent level.

8. **Impact of entrepreneurial training programmes on attitude developed by the trainees towards social media marketing**

Out of total 115 trainees, 27 percent of the trainees were found to have highly favourable attitude towards social media marketing and 65 percent had favourable attitude towards on social media marketing. This finding gives an indication that although the trainees were quite new to this trend of marketing, they had developed great confidence and self esteem in social media marketing. . However, only 8 percent of the trainees had unfavourable attitude towards social media marketing.

9. Adoption of social media marketing by the trainees

Out of 40 trainees from Handloom and textiles group, 33 of them adopted and 7 trainees did not adopt social media marketing for their enterprises. Out of 27 trainees from sericulture technology, 25 adopted and 2 trainees did not adopt social media for marketing. From bamboo craft group, out of 20 trainees, 15 of them adopted and 5 of them did not adopt social media marketing. From the group of traditional food preparation, out of 38 trainees, 19 adopted and 9 trainees did not adopt social media marketing. This implies that out of 115 trainees, 92 of them adopted social media for marketing.

Regarding reasons of adopting social media, trainees opined that they wanted to bring awareness among public about their products, advertisement of products, attracting customers and marketing, to stay up to date with the latest trend, collecting reviews and feedback, solving customers' queries and competition analysis.

Although all the trainees found the training useful and interesting, due to certain reasons, some of the trainees from all the four groups did not adopt social media such as feeling of insecurity in social media, poor network connection, fear of failure, lack of family support, developed a negative attitude after apprehending probabilities of account hacking or fraudulent activities, slow learner in terms of technical knowhow etc.

10. Personality growth attained by the trainees after the entrepreneurial training programme

Majority of the trainees were able to improve their personality in terms of entrepreneurial activities to some extent after the entrepreneurial training programme. They were able to develop skills and qualities such as leadership, time management, communication skills, creating linkages, decision making, finance management, monitoring and so on.

11. Impact of the entrepreneurial training programme on financial and social aspects

The entrepreneurial training programme has brought some impact on the financial and social aspects of the trainees. It was observed that the training has brought positive growth in terms of income (68.7 percent), improvement in savings (60.9 percent), relaxation in spending money (68.7 percent), gradually clearing off debts (46.9 percent), financial contribution to family members at the time of crisis (54.8 percent), and better access to financial institutions (49.6 percent) etc.

The entrepreneurial training programme has also brought some positive impact on the social aspects such as the trainees got a social identity (90.4 percent), work life balance, increase in social contacts, better utilization of time, more involvement in virtual social gatherings, improved self esteem etc.

I. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the selected rural women have been benefitted to a great extent through this study. It had created for them a formal established firm in the online platform for their lifelong monetary income, which will further make them self sufficient and independent throughout their future. The status of the women has been raised and simultaneously the struggles they had to face especially in their marketing have greatly reduced. Also, this study has helped the women in their overall personality improvement that are necessary for entrepreneurial activities and furnished them with other basic miscellaneous skills that are needed to run an enterprise sustainably. The positive impact brought forth by the training programme has made this study a fruitful one.

J. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Government and NGOs should provide well structured training programmes on usage of social media and develop their technical skills in handling of online platform especially for all the rural micro entrepreneurs, so that they can operate their accounts and websites efficiently.
- Government has launched many schemes like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) and 'Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan (PMGDISHA) for skill development and digital literacy of the rural people. But, the people are still lagging behind because of lack of motivation, awareness and training. Therefore, motivation, awareness and training are needed on the part of the rural people to come forward and avail their opportunities.
- More research studies related to influence of social media on entrepreneurship can be conducted for men and women.

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